

DRAFT COPY

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES for 12/6/06

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Chet Avery, Chair
Pat Beatti
Tom Dowling
Peggy Fields
Joe Foresta
Ben Garrett
Doug James
Robert Mayorga
Doug Owens
Paula Vanmeter
Celestine Walker (teleconference)
Brenda Wickard

STAFF

Ken Knorr
Bob Krollman
Jane Lively
Elin Glass

The Virginia Assistive Technology System's (VATS) Advisory Council held its quarterly meeting on December 6, 2006 in the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, Chapel conference room. The meeting was called to order at 10:15 am by Chet Avery, Council Chair.

Welcome and Introductions

Chet Avery called for round-table introductions and asked that new members to tell other council members about themselves. When introductions were completed, Chet asked Ken Knorr to provide a brief overview of VATS for the new members.

Opening Remarks by DRS Commissioner Rothrock

James A. Rothrock, Commissioner, Department of Rehabilitative Services, opened the meeting with a welcome and brief discussion of ways the Council can be involved with VATS in setting standards and assuring consistency within the statewide recycling programs. He informed the Council that he would forward a budget amendment this session to gain State support of Assistive Technology recycling and suggested that council members should begin educating their representatives accordingly.

Council wishes to have budget amendment restore State funding to it original lever, prior to State budget cuts several years ago.

DRAFT COPY

Council requested VATS staff to send them the web address of the State Legislators and to prepare a fact sheet on VATS and recycling for them to use in educating their legislators.

Minutes

The minutes of the September meeting were approved as written. Joe Foresta/Tom Dowling

Public Comment

Jane Lively provided an overview of public comment sent to the Council by Doug Gonz who is heading up a grant workgroup to look at providing assistive technology to consumers of five (5) community services boards in the Northern Virginia area. Mr. Gonz has invited Ms. Lively to sit with his workgroup to represent related VATS activities. The Council requested that Ms. Lively contact Mr. Gonz to make a presentation at the March Council meeting. Ms Lively is also to discuss with Mr. Gonz having a representative of the Council participate.

Announcements

The Chair suggested inviting representatives of Disability Services Boards to council meetings when meeting in their areas.

The Chair asks that all PR information be in accessible formats.

Report of Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) Council Summit.

Jim Rothrock, DRS Commissioner, called a summit of all of the DRS boards and councils to have them know each other and to develop ways for the various councils to be aware of what other councils are doing. Chet Avery attended the summit and provided an overview for the VATS Advisory Council. Chet applauded the summit as very valuable. The group developed recommendations for communication among the councils, which will be implemented by DRS staff who support those councils.

Chet also noted that the council would support a budget proposal to support recycling and noted that the Council would like to include restoration of State funding for the Regional Sites. VATS staff was asked to send members the web address where they could identify their legislators. Members also requested that staff develop a fact sheet for them to use in educating their legislators about assistive technology recycling.

General Discussion

Two significant issues were raised by Council members for discussion. Assistive technology training, i.e. training for consumers on acquired assistive technology is a serious gap in the service system and is frequently the reason that equipment is

DRAFT COPY

abandoned. The Council will continue to work on this issue. Applying for the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities discretionary grant funds might be one way to set up a model training program. Council asked VATS staff to gather information about the grant and the issue of training.

The second issue regards the barriers to students having the assistive technology they need to be successful in school. It was pointed out that each local education administration has its own set of standards or rules with regard to students and the use of assistive technology, and the barriers lie within these rules. Members reported that in poorer school districts, those who help develop Individual Education Plans (IEP) are reluctant to mention assistive technology in the context of the IEP because the school district may not be able to afford it. In some schools, students are not allowed to take their assistive technology home, so do not have it available to assist in the completion of their assignments. In most school districts the assistive technology does not follow the students who are moving from elementary school to middle school and to high school. This creates a lag for the student who may have to learn how to use a different device.

The Council was very concerned about the issues in the schools. VATS staff was asked to invite John Eisenberg, a council member representing the VA Department of Education, to make a presentation at the next Council meeting.

Council Member Activities

Each Council member described the activities they have been involved with and what those they represent are doing with regard to assistive technology. Everyone was actively involved in various recycling initiatives as well as getting AT to the population they serve.

Celestine Walker reported that the Lynchburg recycling center had opened its doors, received donations, and was giving out equipment.

Ben Garrett, Department of Aging (DOA), reported that the DOA had implemented it “no wrong door” concept. This is to help senior citizens receive needed services no matter where they contact the services system. DOA is also implementing the “Grand Driver Program.”

Peggy Fields, Department for Blind and Visual Impairments (DBVI), reported that she had attended a DBVI statewide staff meeting. At that meeting, staff discussed whether assistive technology purchased by DBVI could be recycled. Technically, equipment purchased with vocational rehabilitation funds would return to DBVI; however, after a certain period, the equipment belongs to the consumer, so, if the consumer chose to donate it to a recycling center, he could do so.

Joe Foresta, a consumer representative, is helping look around the Petersburg area for storage space for a recycling center. He also provided the name of a person who would be interested in serving on the Council.

DRAFT COPY

Doug James, DRS Regional Manager for Northern Virginia, let Council members know that the person heading up the recycling effort in Fairfax, John Hudson, had moved to another job and would no longer be able to lead the planning team. Doug is also working with the VATS Regional Site on a pilot to provide training to consumers.

Paula Vanmeter, Department of Medical Assistance Services (Medicaid), requested information on recycling so that she could train her staff. She was referred to the Foundation for Rehabilitation Equipment and Endowment (FREE) recycling program in Roanoke to see if they have a “canned” presentation.

Patricia Beatti, a new member representing the board of the DBVI and first vice president of the Old Dominion Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired, an affiliate of the American Council of the Blind was concerned about seniors with visual impairments who are not eligible for vocational rehabilitation funding from the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired may be going without needed equipment. She also raised the issue of kids not getting the assistive technology they need to be successful in school; particularly, those in rural areas. She would like for the Council to do some legislative advocacy. (See “General Discussion” above.) VATS staff mentioned their publication, “Assistive Technology in the Student’s Education Program,” which is a handbook for parents and school personnel. Council requested that copies be sent to all members.

Brenda Wickard, from the disAbility Resource Center, reported that the storage area for their recycling program, the Equipment Exchange, will be completely renovated in January. The program is already operational, but needed more storage space.

Doug Owens, representing the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD), announced that recycling did not make it to the priority list for VBPD grant funds. However, there will be discretionary grant funds for which to apply. Staff was asked to get information about the grant deadlines, etc. Doug also mentioned his AT scholarship program which provides the means for people with disabilities to receive computer skills training, prescriptive to individual learning needs and schedule.

Roberto Mayorga, representing the southwest part of the State, reports that he is develop a business plan to fully establish a user-friendly vendor database on the VATS website.

Council Orientation Manual

Bob Krollman, VATS Community Outreach Coordinator, asked Council if they would like to have a council orientation manual. He described what it might include and there was unanimous agreement that such a manual would be very helpful. Bob will take the lead on developing the manual.

VATNet Grant Update

Ms. Lively informed the Council that the grant VATS applied for to set up a network of recycling programs across the State had been awarded at \$561,733 by the US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration. The Council will develop a letter

DRAFT COPY

supporting the Business Plan and include it as an addendum to the plan. The plan and the letter will be sent to the DRS Commissioner, Jim Rothrock.

Demonstration of new VATS Website

Bob Krollman demonstrated the new VATS Website for the Council and described areas that are to be populated. Council would like to see a list of Council members, mission of the Council, and meeting information. Bob will see that the requested information is added.

Meeting Dates

Chet called for any new business and the Council discussed meeting dates for the coming year. The next meetings are scheduled for March 21, 2007 in Charlottesville, location to be determined. The following meeting is tentatively scheduled for June 6, 2007 in Richmond.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45PM.